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The nature of curriculum studies scholarship in South Africa: 2008 - 2010

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ABSTRACT

Curriculum studies (CS) provided an important focus for international scholars: Pinar (1978; 2011) in the United States of America; Barriga (2003) in Mexico; Moreira (2003) in Brazil; Green (2003) in Australia; Chambers (2003) in Canada and Smith and Ewing (2002) in Australia. International perspectives to understand CS include the traditionalist, conceptual-empiricism, reconceptualization and the internationalization perspectives (Pinar 1978; 2011). There has been a movement internationally in favour of internationalization as this promised a regional and global understanding of curriculum issues, while maintaining a focus on local curriculum issues. In South Africa, scholars such as Hoadley (2010), Hugo (2010) and Le Grange (2010) also focused on CS. Hoadley (2010) analysed scholarship in the field of CS in South Africa from 2000-2007 through a study that characterised scholarship in the 'knowledge', 'knower' and the 'bureaucratic' modes. The problem this current study addressed is the dearth of knowledge about the nature of CS scholarship in South Africa in the period 2008-2010. A qualitative case study approach informed a review and analysis of three accredited and peer-reviewed South African journals, which drew on theoretical concepts informed by Pinar (1978; 2011) and Hoadley (2010) to provide insights into the dominant theoretical and methodological attributes of CS scholarship in this context. Focusing on issues related to schooling, this study's findings revealed that the national field of CS scholarship was rich, diverse, multi-faceted and fragmented in its theoretical and methodological attributes. Diverse disciplines, specialisations and theoretical frameworks meant that the field lacked a clearly defined focus. Implications of this study for cumulative work and methodological rigour in the production of knowledge in CS are highlighted. The strength of this study is that it draws on international and national perspectives to characterise the theoretical and methodological attributes of scholarship in the field of CS in South Africa. Based on this study, scholars are able to gain a better understanding of the nature of the field. Consequently, they may advance the field by developing appropriate theories and methodologies to solve curriculum issues and advance scholarly practices based on historical insights gained from existing scholarship.

Keywords: Curriculum studies scholarship; theoretical perspectives in curriculum studies; theoretical attributes of curriculum studies scholarship; methodological attributes of curriculum studies scholarship; post-Apartheid curriculum studies scholarship.